IN THE CLAIMS:

1.   (Currently amended) A method for maintaining software products implemented
in a plurality of files in client computer systems located decentralized relative to at least
one central software maintenance institution wherein the client computer systems are
connectable with the at least one central software maintenance institution via a network,
the method comprising the steps of:

  providing product information for a product in the network system for making the
product information available for said plurality of client systems; and

  performing a software maintenance action for the product from a client site by
downloading data required for said software maintenance action from a sequence of
repositories, wherein said sequence of repositories includes at least a top-level repository
storing a set of files for the product and a local-level repository storing a first subset of
files for the product, wherein the first subset of files is specific for a given client system,
and data downloaded from the top-level repository is different from data downloaded
from the local-level repository and the data downloaded from both the top-level
repository and the local-level repository is used by the given client system in performing
the software maintenance action.

2.   (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein the sequence of
repositories includes a mid-level repository storing a second subset of files for the
product, wherein the second subset of files includes at least one of a version update, a fix,
and nation-specific files.

3.   (Previously presented) The method according to claim 2 in which a fall back to
an older program version is achieved by inactivating a newer version and activating the
older version

4.   (Currently amended) ~~The method according to claim 2 in which said step of
performing said maintenance action serves for an upgrade of a program on at least one
target system and said step including the steps of:~~ A method for maintaining software

products implemented in a plurality of files in client computer systems located decentralized relative to at least one central software maintenance institution wherein the client computer systems are connectable with the at least one central software maintenance institution via a network, the method comprising the steps of:

providing product information for a product in the network system for making the product information available for said plurality of client systems;

performing a software maintenance action for the product from a client site by downloading data required for said software maintenance action from a sequence of repositories, wherein said sequence of repositories includes at least a top-level repository storing a set of files for the product and a local-level repository storing a first subset of files for the product, wherein the first subset of files is specific for a given client system, wherein the performing step comprises:

generating an input list of files downloadable from said sequence of repositories;

generating a list of files present on said target client system;

comparing the list of files downloadable from said sequence of repositories with the list of files present on said target client system; and

downloading a plurality of files, wherein the plurality of files includes only files which are not yet present in the target client system.

5.   (Previously presented) The method according to claim 4 in which a total input list is generated by subsequently accessing the repositories and by merging input lists for each repository with a priority of more local files.

6.   (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of integrating files into the target system which have been identified by a look-aside procedure as residing in a neighbor system easier to be accessed by the target system than one of said repositories.

7.   (Currently amended) A system for maintaining software products, the system comprising:

at least one central software maintenance site;

a network;

a plurality of client computer systems decentralized relative to the at least one central software maintenance site, wherein the client computer systems are connectable with the at least one central software maintenance institution via the network; and

a sequence of repositories, wherein the sequence of repositories provides product information for a product in the network system for making the product information available for said plurality of client systems, wherein said sequence of repositories includes at least a top-level repository storing a complete set of files for the product and a local-level repository storing a first subset of files for the product, wherein the subset of files is specific for a given client system,

wherein a given client computer system from within the plurality of client computer systems performs a software maintenance action for the product by downloading data required for said software maintenance action from the sequence of repositories and data downloaded from the top-level repository is different from data downloaded from the local-level repository and the data downloaded from both the top-level repository and the local-level repository is used by the given client system in performing the software maintenance action.

8.   (Previously presented) The system according to claim 7, wherein the sequence of repositories is provided as a plurality of hierarchically arranged repositories.

9.   (Previously presented) The system according to claim 7, wherein the sequence of repositories includes a mid-level repository storing a second subset of files for the product, wherein the second subset of files includes at least one of a version update, a fix, and nation-specific files.

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10.   (Previously presented) The system according to claim 8, further comprising:

at least one neighbor system, wherein the software maintenance action includes integrating files into the target system which have been identified by a look-aside procedure as residing in the at least one neighbor system easier to be accessed by the target system than one of said repositories.

11.   (Previously presented) The system according to claim 7, further comprising shadow repositories for at least a subset of the sequence of repositories.

12.   (Currently amended) A computer program product, in a computer readable medium, for maintaining software products implemented in a plurality of files in client computer systems located decentralized relative to at least one central software maintenance institution wherein the client computer systems are connectable with the at least one central software maintenance institution via a network, the computer program product comprising:

instructions for providing product information for a product in the network system for making the product information available for said plurality of client systems; and

instructions for performing a software maintenance action for the product from a client site by downloading data required for said software maintenance action from a sequence of repositories, wherein said sequence of repositories includes at least a top-level repository storing a complete set of files for the product and a local-level repository storing a first subset of files for the product, wherein the first subset of files is specific for a given client system, and data downloaded from the top-level repository is different from data downloaded from the local-level repository and the data downloaded from both the top-level repository and the local-level repository is used by the given client system in performing the software maintenance action.

13.   (Previously presented) The computer program product according to claim 12, wherein the sequence of repositories includes a mid-level repository storing a second subset of files for the product, wherein the second subset of files includes at least one of a version update, a fix, and nation-specific files.

14.   (Previously presented) The computer program product according to claim 13 in which the instructions for performing said maintenance action serves for an upgrade of a program on at least one target system and the instructions for performing said maintenance action includes:

instructions for generating an input list of files downloadable from said sequence of repositories;

instructions for generating a list of files present on said target client system;

instructions for comparing the list of files downloadable from said sequence of repositories with the list of files present on said target client system; and

instructions for downloading a plurality of files, wherein the plurality of files includes only files which are not yet present in the target client system.

15.   (Previously presented) The computer program product according to claim 14 in which a total input list is generated by subsequently accessing the repositories and by merging input lists for each repository with a priority of more local files.

16.   (Previously presented) The computer program product according to claim 12, further comprising instructions for integrating files into the target system which have been identified by a look-aside procedure as residing in a neighbor system easier to be accessed by the target system than one of said repositories.